

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7509

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AMGT, PERP, LE

SUBJECT: U.S. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON

REF: STATE 061158

1. THE FOLLOWING IS A BELATED RESPONSE TO STATE 061158.

2. THERE HAS BEEN NO DISPUTE OVER OUR BASIC GOALS IN LEBANON: (A) A UNITED LEBANON AND A CENTRAL GOVERNMENT COMMANDING GREATER POPULAR SUPPORT. (B) A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE FOR LEBANON IN THE PEACE PROCESS AND (C) PROGRESS TOWARDS ECONOMIC RECOVERY. (B) AND (C) ARE RELATIVELY EASY TO ACCOMPLISH, PROVIDED SOMETHING CAN BE DONE ABOUT (A), AND THAT IS WHERE THE DIFFICULTY LIES. THE PROBLEM IS NOT ONE OF ENDS VERSUS MEANS, IT IS ONE OF A LACK OF MEANS. MORE SPECIFICALLY, OF A LACK OF LEVERAGE TO MOVE THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT ALONG THE ROAD TO SALVATION.

3. WE HAVE DONE EVERYTHING LISTED UNDER PARA. 2 OF STATE 295490. EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE DEVELOPED A RELATIONSHIP OF CONFIDENCE WITH SARKIS AND HIS PRINCIPAL ADVISORS AND ARE IN ALMOST DAILY CONTACT WITH THEM. WE HAVE ASSURED THEM OF U.S. SUPPORT AND HAVE TRIED TO STIMULATE THEM TO TAKE DECISIVE LEADERSHIP, BUT WE HAVE COME UP AGAINST THE LEBANESE TRADITION OF NON-CONFIDENTIAL

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GOVERNMENT, AND THE RETIRING PERSONALITY OF SARKIS. WE CAN LEAD HIM TO WATER BUT WE CAN'T MAKE HIM DRINK.

4. EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE URGED PROMINENT LEBANESE LEADERS, ACROSS THE BOARD, TO SUPPORT THE SARKIS REGIME AND NATIONAL UNITY. WITH THE MOSLEM LEADERS, WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS, WE ARE PREACHING TO THE CON-

VERTED. WITH THE MARONITES, WE MAY HAVE HAD SOME EFFECT, BUT IT HAS BEEN HEAVY GOING. THEY ARE STILL SUFFERING FROM A PSYCHOSIS ABOUT THE MOSLEMS. NEVERTHELESS, SOME PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE TOWARDS A LIMITED COMPROMISE THAT WILL PERMIT THE FACTIONS TO WORK TOGETHER.

5. WE HAVE TRIED TO DISABUSE EVERYONE OF THE IDEA THAT WE FIND PARTITION ACCEPTABLE. EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE MADE THIS CLEAR AT ALL POLITICAL LEVELS. WE THINK WE HAVE CONVINCED MANY PEOPLE WE MEAN IT, BUT THE LEBANESE LEAN TO THE CONSPIRATORIAL VIEW OF HISTORY AND ARE PRONE TO DOUBT SIMPLE EXPLANATIONS. NEVERTHELESS, THE WORD THAT WE OPPOSE PARTITION IS WIDESPREAD IN LEBANON.

6. ENCOURAGING A RESTRAINED AND CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH TO CONTENTIOUS ISSUES COMES NATURALLY TO US, BUT IT DOES NOT ALWAYS WORK WITH THE LEBANESE, WHO TEND TO RESPOND EMOTIONALLY TO CHALLENGE. NEVERTHELESS, WE THINK WE HAVE HAD SOME EFFECT IN THIS RESPECT, ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT MEASURE IT.

7. DEMONSTRATING US SUPPORT FOR LEBANON HAS BEEN A CONSTANT CONCERN AND WE HAVE BEEN ACTIVE IN RECOMMENDING ACTIONS IN THIS RESPECT AND IN TAKING STEPS

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ON OUR OWN, SUCH AS: (1) PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY THE AMBASSADOR, (2) FREQUENT CONTACTS WITH POLITICAL LEADERS IN SUPPORT OF GOL POLICIES, (3) ACTIVE PROMOTION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS, AND (4) POSITIVE RESPONSES TO GOL REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE. WE BELIEVE OUR MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID PROGRAMS ARE SUFFICIENT IN THE LIGHT OF LEBANON'S POLITICAL ABSORBTIVE AND REAL NEEDS. AS THE EVENTS OF MARCH 1978 HAVE DRAMATICALLY DEMONSTRATED, LEBANON'S MOST URGENT PROBLEM IS THE PALESTINIAN ARMED PRESENCE, WHICH IS ALSO AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE OVERALL ME PROBLEM. THE LEBANESE CANNOT COPE WITH THIS PROBLEM ALONE AND ARE DESPARATELY SEEKING OUR HELP IN RESOLVING IT.

8. WE ARE DOING OUR BEST TO MONITOR THE UTILIZATION OF US MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO INSURE THAT THIS IS NOT MISAPPROPRIATED OR PERCEIVED TO BE SUPPORTING ONE FACTION AT THE EXPENSE OF ANOTHER. STAFF LIMITATIONS, AND THE WEAKENED STATE OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT MAKE THE FIRST DIFFICULT TO GUARANTEE, AND, AS FOR THE LATTER, WE MUST RESIGN OURSELVES THAT AT LEAST SOME PERSONS WILL ALWAYS

TAKE WHATEVER WE DO, SHORT OF OUR TURNING THE WHOLE
STORE OVER TO THEM, AS BEING PARTIAL TO THEIR OPPONENTS.
PARKER

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